

VZCZCXRO7844
PP RUEHBC RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHRH #0067 0141714
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 141714Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3993
INFO RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T RIYADH 000067

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA
DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI (WALKER, SHUKAN, JACHIM), INL, DRL, PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: PLANNED FEBRUARY VISIT OF PUTIN TO THE KINGDOM

REF: 2004 RIYADH 01913

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The Russian Embassy to the KSA confirmed January 8 media reports that Russian President Putin will visit the KSA in February, fulfilling a promise made over three years ago. Putin will be the first Russian President to visit the KSA. His visit follows up on the September 2003 visit to Russia by then-Crown Prince (CP) Abdullah and FM Saud Al-Faisal. As in September 2003, Putin and King Abdullah are expected to discuss the Middle East peace process, Iraq, terrorism, alleged Saudi support of Chechen rebels, oil and gas production, trade, investment, and other bilateral and international issues according to the Russian Embassy to the KSA. The two leaders are also expected to discuss Iran and its nuclear ambitions. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) During his three-day visit to Russia in September 2003, then-CP Abdullah signed a number of agreements and discussed bilateral and international issues. Abdullah was the highest level Saudi official to visit Russia since the then-USSR recognized Saudi Arabia in 1926. (NOTE: The USSR and Saudi Arabia had no diplomatic relations between 1938 and ¶1990. END NOTE). The two leaders called for implementation of international decisions on the Palestinian-Israeli issue and transformation of the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. They also signed a five-year oil and gas cooperation agreement that concerned joint development of gas fields, geological surveys, use of gas for desalinating sea water, construction of gas pipelines, gas-powered power stations, and other oil and chemical facilities.

¶3. (U) Lukoil won one of the four gas exploration and production deals in the Kingdom, which was signed in 2004. It remains the single largest Russian venture in the Kingdom (reftel). There are rumors that the SAG and the Russian government have agreed to allow Russians to work in the KSA as domestic workers.

COMMENT

¶4. (S) The visit of Russian President Putin will build on a concerted and well-planned diplomatic and economic strategy devised by Abdullah, begun while he was CP and continued as King, to reduce the KSA's reliance on the U.S. and broaden and strengthen Saudi Arabia's international and regional

contacts and influence. The visit will support on-going KSA efforts to strengthen economic and political ties with major consumers and producers of oil and gas. The Saudis will probably prod yet another member of the Quartet to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli and Lebanese issues, as well as address developments in Syria. The visit will also support the Kingdom's efforts to strengthen ties with all five permanent members of the UN Security Council and almost all of Iran's neighbors. The timing of this visit is especially noteworthy given recent developments in Iraq and the continuing impasse over Iran's nuclear ambitions. END COMMENT.
OBERWETTER